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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001924

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [ET](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: PROMINENT EDITOR SAYS SOMALIA
DEVELOPMENTS THREATEN INTERNAL PEACE

Classified By: CHARGE D/AFFAIRS VICKI HUDDLESTON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Amare Aregawi, a prominent and well connected newspaper editor, told PAO in late June that the GOE perceived increased threats from several sources, including increased fundamentalism in Somalia and hardline factions of the CUDP. Amare pointed to pervasive signs of increasing Muslime influence and fundamentalist presence in Ethiopia and called on the CUDP in Ethiopia to distance itself from the Eritrean-backed Alliance for Freedom and Democracy. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Amare Aregawi, editor and publisher of "The Reporter," a moderate and influential newspaper, was a close ally of PM Meles Zenawi during his successful overthrow of the Derg in 1991. Amare and Meles, relationship has since cooled. Amare,s recent bid for an independent radio license was denied by the government. PAO spoke with Amare about an editorial in the June 17 edition of the paper entitled "An Unholy Alliance," which highlighted the May 4 United Nations Security Council report on violations of the UN arms embargo in Somalia. The editorial stated that the recent military success of fundamentalist groups (the Union of Islamic Courts) was bound to destabilize the whole of Somalia as well as spread violence to Ethiopia. The paper went on to say that Ethiopian opposition groups with links to the Oromo Liberation Front and Ogaden National Liberation Front -- organizations with ties to terrorist group AIAI -- need to make their position clear as it was a matter of national security.

UIC An Escalating Threat to Ethiopia

¶3. (C) Amare was visibly upset and blunt in his assessment. He saw the UIC poised to sweep northwest to Baidoa, with the intent of eventually establishing an Islamic state throughout the whole of Somalia. Ethiopia's national security was threatened and the two countries could go to war. Amare commented that "this is a gun issue that needs to be handled strategically. The burden to fight the Islamist threat will rest on Ethiopia and Kenya." The threat to Ethiopia had escalated, Amare said he had received assurances from the Ethiopian military leaders that they had moved a whole division to the border, but would not move against the UIC until (the GOE) had conferred with the USG.

Signs of Increasing Fundamentalism?

¶5. (C) According to Amare, there are signs of increasing

fundamentalism in Ethiopia. He mentioned the following:

- The building of 56 new mosques in Addis in the last 10 years;
- More partially veiled young women driving late model cars;
- In Wollo and Haik, youngsters are wearing Bin Laden watches and T shirts emblazoned with "US get out of Iraq,"
- much to the consternation of residents;
- The visible increase of mosques being build on the road to the Southern Region capital of Awassa;
- Clashes between Muslim and Christian students at several universities in the past months;
- Amare received untraceable cell phone calls from unknown persons telling him to desist from writing about fundamentalist threats to Ethiopia

¶6. (C) Amare queried where all the money was coming from for the construction and visible consumption in the Muslim community, noting that money and arms could easily come through porous borders, even by pastoralist who have multiple nationalities and no ID cards.

CUDP Should Clarify Where it Stands

¶7. (C) Amare commented that with the national security threat to Ethiopia represented by the links established between the OLF, ONLF, AIAI and the UIC, the CUDP needed to clarify its stance. Amare added that the CUDP North America now consisted of several splinter groups headed by Berhane Mewa, Solomon Bekele, and Elias Kifle. The CUDP recently re-established in Ethiopia, headed by Temesgen Zewde and

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Ayele Chamiso, was losing adherents because people did not know what the party stood for. The party seemed to lack any clear political, economic or social platform. Current threats to Ethiopia's national security required that the CUDP in Ethiopia needed to make clear that it did not stand with the CUDP Diaspora in its new alliance with Eritrean-linked insurgencies like the OLF and ONLF.

The Ubiquitous Hand of Isaias

¶8. (C) Amare stated that Eritrea,s president Isaias was seeking to destabilize Ethiopia. He claimed Isaias had funded the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD) conference in Holland in May at which the OLF, ONLF, and the CUDP North America had made common cause. Amare noted that Isaias' Ethiopian surrogates had suffered a defeat about 2-3 weeks ago in the Gonder region. The ENDF, he said, got word that Isaias had planned to infiltrate 200 guerrillas and political leaders into a training camp in Quara, Amhara Region. The Ethiopian armed forces had killed around 100 of the guerrillas and captured the remainder.

Comment

¶9. (C) The circulation of The Reporter is 6750 people in Amharic and 2000 people in English. Amare, while not a card-carrying member of the TPLF, remains sympathetic to the ruling party. He is well connected to the intelligence services of the EPRDF.
HUDDLESTON